

Romanticism (1820-1900)

By : Please

This is my response to a school assignment asking me to explain which musical period was my favorite. Read if you're inclined, Thank you :)

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My Favorite Musical Period

Romanticism, I believe, can truly be called the last period of time that music could be identified and characterized. Romanticism was the culmination of every earlier period of music. It was the climax of all artistic understanding, the only possible end product to the eras of time before the 20th century came and destroyed all semblance of organization or sameness in the minds of artists. Spanning 80 years, this period began in 1820 and ended with the turn of a century, in 1900. 80 years is a long time to see a world develop, and develop it did, with music and the arts following in its footsteps. After the revolutions and enlightenment's of the Classical period, the Romantic era was a welcome respite from strict standards and political upheaval. It was a time for growth and for understanding to be humanized, for the facts and balance of the Classical period to be emotionalized and brought to the extremes.

The philosophy of the time was more-or-less be who you are and like what you like and feel however you feel, and show it to the best of your abilities. A clever motto, if you ask me. This was a time to push the well-founded limits, but still the artists remained resolute in their ideal of expressing emotion. During the course of this period a Second Industrial Revolution occurred, causing a measure of comfort to be added to the lifestyles of the people, but it also resulted in conditions that were less than desirable for the working class. However, music filled the void that left the overworked class feeling dull and tired, it stepped up to add meaning and beauty to a world so often dark and dreary.

The music of this period had some resembling factors, long, lyrical melodies; rich, dissonant harmonies; syncopated, rubato rhythms; emotional, extreme expressions; and long, descriptive forms. Two of my favorite pieces from this era are the First Movement - Symphony #5 by Beethoven and Dies Irae - Requiem by Verdi. These two pieces show different but obviously very expressive emotions by the artists. The musicians of this time found it imperative to create music that could be remembered and emotionally stimulating to the listener. Often using dissonance to create an eerie mood, music from this era is often times easily recognizable. Of course, being that the emphasis was on the artist's perception, not all of the music necessarily followed these guidelines. Some musicians chose to write their music following the rules of the Classical period, and other times the musicians would create music so eerie and dissonant that it is neigh on impossible to ignore the heart wrenching emotions of the artist.

Anyone who knows me would probably have guessed that this would be my favorite artistic period. I live from emotion to emotion... I love expression, and I love feeling what other people are. Romanticism was all about conveying, sharing, and feeling emotion. The Artists of this time made it their aim to create music that was stimulating and interesting and emotionally vivid. Music began to inculcate not just a love of music but to re-create in people an appreciation for the very thing that makes us human. Never again would the globe push itself on a crusade solely with the purpose of making people feel and understand each other. Romanticism was music. Romanticism was humanity. Romanticism was life. For me, these ideals still are.

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